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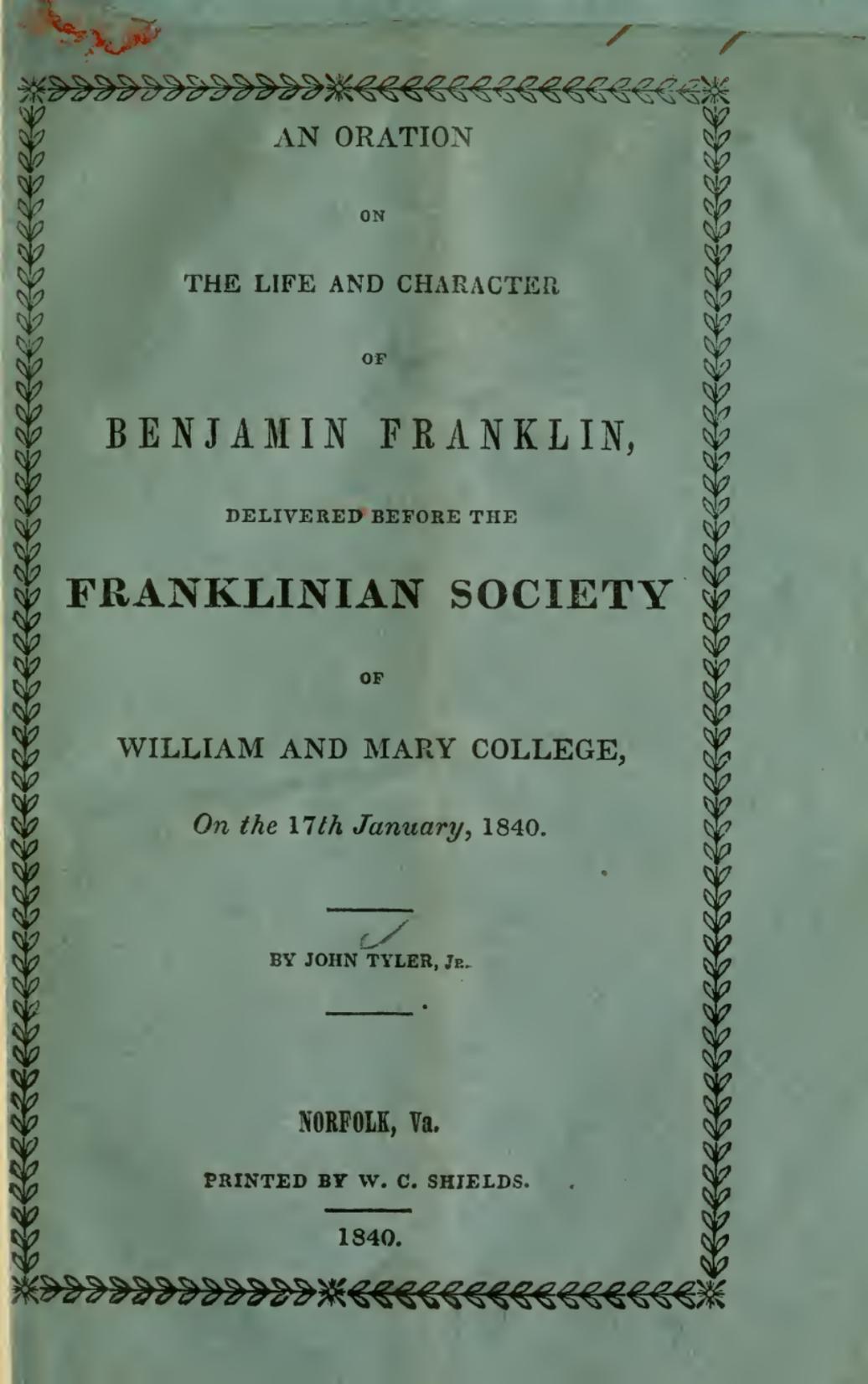
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AN ORATION
ON
THE LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,
DELIVERED BEFORE THE
FRANKLINIAN SOCIETY

OF
WILLIAM AND MARY COLLEGE,

On the 17th January, 1840.

BY JOHN TYLER, JR.

NORFOLK, Va.

PRINTED BY W. C. SHIELDS.

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WILLIAM AND MARY, January 20th, 1840.

Dear Sir:

In compliance with the request of the Franklinian Society, we solicit, for publication, a copy of your Oration, delivered on the 17th instant. We have only to assure you, that it is with mingled feelings of approbation for your effort, and of respect and friendship for yourself, that we perform this duty. Very respectfully,

JOS. M. CARRINGTON,
BENJ. T. OWEN,
JOHN R. WRIGHT,
BENJ. F. GARRETT,
WM. E. BLANKINGSHIP,
GEO. WM. RICHARDSON, } Committee.

To Mr. JOHN TYLER, Jr.

WILLIAMSBURG, January 23d, 1840.

Gentlemen:

I herewith comply with the request contained in your's of the 20th, and send you a copy of the Address, delivered by me, before the Franklinian Society, on the 17th instant. Its faults, I am confident, are many; but hope that the pressure of my College duties, together with an indisposition, which unfitted me for labour during several weeks after my election, will form, in some measure, an excuse for them.

With the warmest wishes for the prosperity of your institution, and the highest respect for yourselves, individually, I am, gentlemen, your's, &c.

JOHN TYLER, Jr.

To MESSRS. CARRINGTON, WRIGHT
and others, of the Committee.

ORATION.

*Mr. President, and Fellow Members
of the Franklinian Society :*

It is ever instructive to dwell upon the past.—From its full bosom the Statesman draws his deep lessons of wisdom, and the Philosopher those truths which he exhibits to the world, and leaves as a rich legacy to mankind. Events which transpire in our own day, are, for the most part, presented to us in the false colours which prejudice and passion throw around them ; but, when viewed far down the long vista of ages, surrounded by time's mystic halo, they appear sublimely beautiful, and stand as bright beacons to all future generations. The Patriot searches only among the spirits of the mighty dead for examples worthy of imitation. The solemn voice of the grave is the only voice which stays vain man in his rash and impetuous career.

We have assembled for the purpose of indulging in this instructive contemplation. As a band of brothers, joined in the noble cause of learning and philanthropy, we come to pay our annual tribute of respect to the deeds of other times, and to him who was the favourite disciple of liberty and the darling child of philosophy. Here, in this place consecrated to science, and around which memory loves to linger, we meet to speak of Franklin—to dwell upon his virtues, and testify to his acts.

We are as yet young, but our school-boy hours are vanishing rapidly away, and all of us will, shortly, stand upon the shore of the boisterous ocean of *busy* life. Our feelings are keen-edged and thrilling; our hopes are lofty and unbounded, and our aspirations would lead us to scan the wide world: but our habits are unsettled, our characters unformed, and our resolution untried. We are destitute of chart and compass, those true and fixed principles which can only guide us, safely, over its trackless and almost illimitable expanse.—Would you provide yourselves with these? learn to imitate the example of Franklin, for his principles were as lasting as the mountains. They consisted of an untiring industry, an unceasing perseverance, and an integrity which could not be shaken.

The biographer, it but too often happens, overlooks, what he considers, the minor traits in the character of those whose lives he would portray; so it is with us, gentlemen, when we meet to speak of Franklin. Enchanted by those brilliant acts of his more advanced years, which won for him the admiration of all civilized nations, we forget the days of his youth, and the gradual steps which led to his unparalleled success. We are always disposed to view him clothed in his robes of lightning, whilst the rolling thunders roar above his head, proclaiming his praise to men and angels. There seems to be a disposition with all men to pass over, without a thought, the humble scenes of life. The gentle beauties of the lowly vale, with most of us, are lost in the gorgeously dyed sunset, or in night's glittering vault. But, to the child of nature, he who is the true Philosopher, there is a loveliness

in the tender grass, and the newly blown flowers, and the young and delicate plants, far more enticing than the splendours of the flaming empyrean. What period of existence, forms a more pleasing study to the moralist, than that of our youth? What can there be more interesting than the gradual budding forth of the powers of mind.

It becomes me, then, gentlemen, to speak of Franklin's early life—To begin with him when, thrown upon the world, he stood an untutored boy, poor and friendless: to view him braving the storms of adversity, with youthful form erect, and thoughtful brow: to trace the development of his character, and to present him to you, by his silent lamp, at dark midnight's hour, holding solitary communion with nature and nature's God, and acquiring those principles, and gathering in that knowledge which raised him from his low condition, from his poverty, and his ignorance, to the highest and proudest seat "among the elders of the land."

In the performance of this important portion of my task, I have none of those "wonder-stirring events, which act upon the imagination, or those romantic incidents, over which the fancy loves to luxuriate, to offer to your admiration. A strict application to his business, a conduct of spotless purity, and a strong desire to be useful in his day and generation, constitute the traits of his early life. Placed, as an apprentice in a printing office, under the sway of a tyrannical master, one, I regret to say, allied to him in blood as a brother, without one word of encouragement, or a single hope, save what consoling anticipation drew

from the future; silently and assiduously, he performed his daily avocations. Still each declining sun brought with it a deep lesson of experience, and each successive night impressed upon his reflecting mind a more solid thought, and a more lasting principle. Though young, he was so fully impressed with the importance of the passing moment, that the short time allowed him for relaxation, was, invariably, devoted to the labour of making himself intimately acquainted with the chaste and beautiful style of Addison, the severe reasoning of Locke, or the sublime character of Socrates. In this we see a display of those elevated sentiments which he received from nature; and, in the facts to which I have alluded, may be found the cause of that energy and firmness, which enabled him to leave the home of his childhood, for the new and perilous scenes of an untried land, as well as that uncompromising hostility which he, ever afterwards, evinced towards tyranny and despotism.

In 1723, at the age of seventeen, he reached Philadelphia, with but a single dollar in his pocket, which constituted the whole of his worldly possessions. Nor was there one among the gay crowd which swept by him, who cast upon him a cheering glance—so poor, and destitute of friends and patrons was he. Thus do those in affluence most commonly pass the needy. Poverty is regarded by them as a fault, and not a misfortune. They forget it is never dishonorable, save when the effect or companion of idleness, intemperance, sloth, or folly; and that it is often associated with all the virtues. Let those who are ashamed of being poor in the vanities of the world, remember the

words of him who was called the just—"It better becomes Aristides to glory in his poverty, than Callias in his riches." This reception might have been withering to one made of less stern stuff than Franklin; but with him, it constituted a new incentive to exertion. His immortal spirit was not to be subdued by the neglect of the wealthy and the falsely proud—He had too much force of character to sink into a pusillanimous dejection. In a short time we find him, as an assistant, in Kiemer's office; by the help of that knowledge which he had snatched from hours generally devoted to debasing lethargy, and, by the most untiring application to his employment, winning the attention of that very public which had so lately treated him with contempt.

But, gentlemen, the age of inexperience seldom passes without its bitter lessons—it did not leave, even Franklin, unscathed, though possessed of a wisdom far beyond his years. Practised upon by one, old in fraud and deception, he is induced to desert the humble means by which he gained his simple livelihood, and is suddenly transported into the heart of that million-peopled mart of Europe—London, the equal home of pomp, and splendour, and glory, and of rags and wretchedness; the mighty place, where "Power and Fame and woman's careless love are but toys of an hour:" the cold and dark cemetery of the feelings and the affections. Although he was the child of adversity, yet he had, so far, avoided those stunning breakers which lie in the sea of misfortune. But he now looked forth upon a scene full of danger and of horror. He looked upon the Maelstrom of life's boundless

ocean, whose dread jaws contained the wrecks of unnumbered ages. The richly carved Corinthian pillar, and the fragments of the stately Gothic pile—the embellished portico, and the squallid hovel—silver, and gold, and pearl, with the plain tortoise or lustreless horn—the lordling with his splendid mantle, and the beggar with his tattered robes—all had become the prey of that engulfing oblivion, which seemed now ready to enshroud him and all his hopes. But what place, circumstance, or power can imprison the soul when striving to ascend? what limits can be prescribed to its action? or what fetters can bind its Godlike proportions? He cast the all comprehending eye of genius around him, and, as if by magic, the scene was divested of its terrors, and stood clothed in colours which caused thrills of pleasure to chase each other through his frame. A change comes over the spirit of his dream, and he stands within a spacious theatre, and sees upon its broad stage a full display of every passion and principle, of every virtue and vice, which human nature is heir to. The many leaved volume of man lies open before him, as well as that book on whose pages are inscribed the knowledge of the world. The sight created within his breast, new hope—instilled fresh animation into his heart, and gave an impulse to his mind, which would not, could not be controlled.

Up to this time he had regarded the press as a mere labour-saving machine, by which the strength of his hands and fingers could be increased, and resorted to it not through choice, but necessity. Now, in this great metropolis, where food for the sight may be found in every direction, he was permitted to see far deeper in-

to its mysteries—He saw in it the lever of Revolution; the means whereby his own giant country, could be aroused to action; the Dethroner of kings, and the Ruler of empires; and he applied himself, incessantly, “from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same,” towards perfecting his skill in its management. The vain and conceited nurselings of aristocracy passed him by, haughtily and scornfully, but he heeded them not; conscious of an honest heart, the smile of satisfaction played around his lips. He beheld in the simple instrument which furnished him, at this moment, with his daily sustenance, a power whose mighty arm would crush the false idols of European customs and Asiatic superstition.

It is, gentlemen, always a pleasant sight to witness the infantile struggles of genius. Behold the young aspirant after fame—the noble student with his pale and manly brow and soul-lit eye, in his search for immortality! In his solitary walks, in the sweet quiet of evening, or, in his lonely cell during the gloomy silence of night, he contemplates the wisdom and works of his God, or keeps an unslumbering watch over the lettered page of science. He sees, in the smallest fibre of the thinnest leaf which “puts forth in the morning and perishes e’er noon”—in each flower which blooms upon the way side—and in each tree which flourishes—as well as in the earth—the ocean—and the stars—a necessary part of the great system of the universe. He drinks deep the inspiring cup of Philosophy, and hears in the hum of each insect—in the carrol of each bird—the low moanings of the winds—the deaf’ning roar of the tempest and the loud crash of the thunder,

a strain of music sweeter by far than any, that ever yet was raised on pipe, or lute, or shell. He gathers, from the fields of nature, rich stores of wisdom, and aspires to be great. He throws aside envy, that noxious feeling, and rivalry constitutes with him but a new incentive to exertion. It leads him to make himself more than others,—not others less than they are. If his rival should “leap up, and pluck bright honor from the pale-faced moon,” he would scale the heavens, and “number every star,” without even attempting to tarnish the bright fame which that rival had acquired.

Such was Franklin at this period of his life. Day after day came and went, yet brought no end to his task. Night followed night, yet his wearied limbs found no rest: unblest by beauty’s smile, unpitied by beauty’s tear, friendless and patronless, he was, nevertheless, indefatigable in his exertions. His taper, that melancholy emblem of thought, shining through his garret window, and penetrating the murky veil of darkness, often startled the robber and incendiary in their piratical course, and as often paled its light before the morning beam. Still an unconquerable desire to excel, and to do good, kept bright the glow upon his cheek, and the fire in his eye. The burnished goal of fame lay glittering before him, and he resolved to win the high prize, or perish, gloriously, in the attempt. In reviewing this portion of his history he has remarked, with a generous pride, that “he passed through the storms of youth, notwithstanding his exposure to evil company, with an unsullied reputation—and, under the most eminent necessities, had never used any cringing submissions, or resorted to any meanness of expedient

for a subsistence." His example thus far, is an invaluable legacy to us, gentlemen, and to our country.

We have now to view him in a new light. In October 1726, again he reaches Philadelphia; but the boy has grown into the man, and, unlike the inexperienced wanderer of a former day, he comes with determination formed and habits settled—he comes with the hoarded wisdom of the past—he comes armed with the weapons of reason and knowledge, to do battle in the cause of suffering humanity, to war against evils and prejudices, and to benefit mankind. The period of his usefulness begins. Now were those who so little befriended him, when helplessness required most help, to experience the result of his labours; and he himself to receive the just meed of virtue. From this time we see the star of his destiny in the ascendant, rising rapidly towards the zenith, and betokening a glorious setting. The obstructions which beset his path are removed, and he advances with a firm and unflinching step in the progress of fortune and preferment. He laid the foundation of the present Philosophical Society, the first of the kind established on this continent, and through its instrumentality, created a taste for letters, and a spirit of emulation in the community. He published his celebrated almanac, containing the sayings of "Poor Richard," or the wise maxims of every age and clime; a work which contributed so much towards the promotion of industry, morality and economy, that it was republished and distributed by order of their respective governments, through England and France, and which, for its sound reason and unsophisticated good sense, continues to be remem-

bered with no little pleasure in those countries as well as our own. He edited a paper apart from politics, devoted to history, science and literature; which together with his other efforts, led to the establishment of the City Police and the Public Library; and the erection of the Philadelphia Hospital and the Pennsylvania College. So comprehensive was his mind, and so unwearied was he in his efforts to reform abuse, correct error, and remove evils, that the most common comforts and conveniences of life received a kindly touch from his hand. Its impress was seen in the decent street and the shady side walk; and was acknowledged by the happy family when gathered around the pleasant hearth, or the warm stove. It is felt, even at this day, in the general expansion of his works and operation of his principles: but revelling in the blessing, we forget him who blessed.

To mention all the acts which he performed at this time, would be to enter into a narration too tedious for the occasion; yet each and every one of them is most worthy your consideration. I cannot, though, fail to call your attention to one trait of character which he now exhibited—it is needless for me to say, one worthy your imitation. We have seen that he hovered, like a guardian angel, over the City of Philadelphia, and, always, kept a watchful eye upon the province of Pennsylvania. We have seen him doing every thing that was done—increasing the virtues, purifying the morals, nursing the sick, clothing the poor, and feeding the hungry of the town—and saving the country, the widow and the orphan—the gentle mother, and the innocent child, from the blood-stained hatchet of the inhuman and lawless savage. Still such was his mod-

esty and prudence that it appeared when he was most active, as if he was not acting.

In the language of Æschilus concerning Amphiarus, it may justly be said,

To be and not to seem, was this man's maxim:
His mind reposed upon its proper wisdom,
And wanted no other praise.

At our age—the age of youth, when the impulses are all strong, and the desires all ardent; when the full current of our feelings, is wont to bear down our judgment; when ambitious thoughts mount upwards, like young eagles, we are apt to overleap the bounds of prudence. We throw ourselves too far forward, we are not only anxious to be the first, but to appear the first. This, when viewed unconnected with its consequences, may be laudable. But, gentlemen, if you will permit one allied to you by an association of several years, thus to address you—remember that others are constituted, like yourselves, with desires, and feelings, and impulses, equally strong and sensitive. To win the prize, then, should be sufficient honor for you. Be like Franklin—Let that spirit which teaches you to spurn inglorious ease, animate your bosoms. Let your thirst for meritorious action burn on, unquenchably, the same. Triumph in the glorious cause of philanthropy, if you can, but never exult in your triumphs; for by so exulting, you plant enmity between yourself and others. Lay aside passion, for, by its withering touch, your brightest prospects will fade. Discard envy, for it fails not to corrupt the purity of the soul. Frown down malice, for peace and good-will ensure a high station among men. Do whatever you undertake, yet so frame your actions, as to seem not to do.

At the age of thirty-five, Franklin had won for himself sufficient honor for any one man. He had acquired the reputation of a reformer and benefactor of his species. He had done enough to have entitled him to the praise of his country, while living, and, after death, to a grateful remembrance among the children of men. But now, in the prime of life, with his faculties fully awake, visions of far deeper glory attended his thoughts. He had, already, subdued the evil propensities of his fellow beings. But now was decreed to him, of all others, a victory destined to live on earth after the pyramids shall have tumbled into ruins. To him alone was given the immortal conquest of the bright spirit of the Aurora Borealis, and the thundering minister of the storm-king. From early childhood to young manhood, we are told, he loved the heaving swell of the ocean—the vivid sports of the playful lightning—the gentle tale of the whispering winds, and the soft tone of the starry sisterhood. Companionless, these formed his associates. They were to him like the breath and the voice of a bright-eyed one—a blessing unspeakable. May it not have been an erratic ray of the future illuminating his mind—a presentiment of approaching fame, which led him thus to fondle Old Ocean's mane, and, with the elements and the "quick spirit of the universe, to hold his dialogues?"

The subject of nature and nature's laws, formed a study most congenial to the disposition, and best adapted to the great intellect of Franklin. Newton, that arch philosopher, having laid bare the mechanism of the world, had just left the arena of his splendid feats, to mingle with the beings of a higher clime.—

In vain had men of science attempted to follow up his sublime discoveries. Each sphere was seen to move on, noiselessly, through the immeasurable fields of space. The true motion and shape of Earth had been explained, but still its internal structure seemed, a heterogeneous mass, heaped together without system or harmony. Franklin touched it with his magic wand, and order out of chaos sprung. Other beauties than those of the fair blossoms of spring, the rich fruits of autumn, the flowing rivulet, the winding dale, and the hoary mountain disclosed themselves to man's enraptured gaze. The penetrating stream of electric fire became instilled into those sterile and unknown substances, which met the eye wherever it was turned, and aroused their dormant energies. The soul of the hard and lifeless rock and dingy ore, and the bright spirit of the diamond, were awakened from their death-like sleep of ages, burst their sepulchral cerements and leaped forth to join the radiant band of aerial essences. The elements of matter were purified of their dross ; and the rich storehouses of nature, filled with silver and gold uncounted,

“Those precious things for which men sell their souls,”

were opened. All things wore a different aspect, and nations stood awe-struck and dazzled by his course of brilliant discovery. From these Western shores of the Atlantic, over the ocean, through England, Germany, France and Italy—that sunny land ! to the black borders of the Baltic, his name was borne upon the wings of the wind, and echoed back in the voice of the loud-speaking thunder. Those proud lords, who passed him by with scorn, when a boy in

the streets of London, together with the conceited princes of Europe, now flocked to witness the wonders of his experiments, and knelt down and did homage, as to a mighty conqueror.

But, gentlemen, think not that Franklin won this extensive renown, without labour. The laurelled wreath was even with him contested; nor did he win it, except by the most arduous struggle. Victory in science has never yet been, gratuitously, bestowed on any man. Truth wears no enchanting garb; she generally comes to us so roughly clad, that we are disposed to repel her, and embrace, in preference, her smiling and gaily dressed antagonist—Deception. He who binds his heart to truth must “steel it” against the world: those errors and prejudices, which time and the passions of men have established and sanctioned, yield to no ordinary exertion. Your opinions, before they are uttered, “must first be stretched upon the rack of experiment and passed through the intense heats of the laboratory;” and even then you must practice patience under the abuse, and firmness under the opposition of those would-be men of letters and scientific critics, who are apt to flock around universities and seats of learning, like the crow in the fable, for the purpose of robing and dressing themselves up in those gaudy feathers—the flimsy opinions of others—who are content to hobble on in the old worn-out paths of falsehood—and whose genius never attempts the difficult ascent of true knowledge; not because it does not desire the performance, but because it was made only to grovel in the dust and mire of folly and passion. These were the men who spurned Columbus—

these were they who carried the Father of Science, the venerable Galileo, through the tortures of the Inquisition: these were the ignorant professors who scoffed at the immortal Newton, though they met and feasted with him at the same board—and these were the pretenders in the Royal Society—I hope they are no longer so—who laughed at the theories of the great sage Franklin. Fortunately for mankind, he had seen too much of the world, now, to be wavered in his course by idle difficulties. Steadily he pursued his experiments, slowly his investigation, and, finally, his brightest hopes were realized. His propositions were based upon the immutable laws of nature, and they will stand, when those sycophants in learning, together with their shadowy works, shall have been swept in the deep gulph of oblivion—

“ When their very names shall be forgotten.”

We have now, gentlemen, arrived at the fourth and most interesting era in Franklin's life. As Hallam has remarked, in his *Middle Ages*, concerning his history of that dark and eventful period, so may we with regard to our review of Franklin's career. “ We began in darkness and calamity, yet as we advanced, the shadows grew fainter and fainter; then the freshness of morning breathed upon us, and now the dim twilight has reddened into the bright lustre of day.” We have seen him as a boy, through the assistance of untiring energy and unceasing perseverance, throwing aside the fetters of ignorance, and bursting through the bonds of poverty: we have viewed him, as the true patriot, attending to the interests of his country, and promoting the happiness of his fellow citizens:

and we have beheld him as the Philosopher, making discoveries in science which men had never dreamed of. We have now to regard him as the Statesman, the Defender of our rights—and the watchful Sentinel of the Revolution. Already has he been thrice victorious—first, over himself—secondly, he subdued the passions and errors of others—and thirdly, the mysterious agent of the tempest, yielded to him submissively. He is now to appear as one of the achievers of the liberties of mankind; for the voice of the Declaration of our Independence will be—(it has been spoken in prophetic language,)—“to some sooner, to others later, but, finally, to all—the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self government.”

I will not, though, weary your patience by dwelling too long upon this eventful portion of his life. It will answer my purpose to refer you to those acts in which he shone most conspicuous. In 1757 he was selected ambassador to Great Britain, by the General Assembly of Pennsylvania, for the purpose of quieting the dispute between that body and the proprietors, which had now arisen to such an alarming height, as to threaten civil war. While at the court of St. James, he not only disabused the public mind of the malignant aspersions thrown out against his constituents, but urged, with irresistible reasoning, the importance of the conquest of Canada from the French—and, finally, by furnishing the ministry with statistical accounts of America, before unknown to the Europeans, became instrumental in the celebrated attack upon Quebec, by

the brave general Wolfe, which freed us from the murderers of Schenectady.

In 1764 the seeds of discontent sown, during the ten years preceding, between the mother country and her trans-atlantic provinces, began to spring up, like noxious plants, poisoning our political atmosphere. The Stamp Act, that tyrannical expedient of taxation, resorted to by those who styled themselves our protectors, had been sanctioned by Parliament; and other miserable measures were in contemplation, which threatened to undermine our social system, as well as to destroy our liberties. The colonies, for a moment, stood paralyzed—but the pen of Franklin and the voice of Henry soon told a tale to our oppressors, causing tyranny to tremble in its high places. Again “the man, who compassed earth and sky to accomplish his benevolent objects,” is called upon by his country to vindicate her rights before the ruling power. Throughout this arduous struggle, unawed by the threats of an angry ministry and unallured by the tempting offers of Grafton and North, he remained true to his faith. In 1766 he opposed an undaunted front to the proceedings of the House of Commons, astounded his enemies, and baffled their attempts to seduce him from the ways of truth and justice. He exhausted every argument in favour of reconciliation, and attempted in every way to ward off the storm which his practised eye saw was, with terrific aspect, approaching. He remonstrated and petitioned;—but finding that the privy council of the king only treated his prayers with contempt, and that his enemies, led on by Wedderburne, (whose name, like that of Erostratus, is destined to live in his-

tory to be the scorn of every honest man,) sought every opportunity to insult his feelings, he bade an affectionate farewell to those intimate friends, who sustained him in all his trials, and to that paragon of excellence, Lord Chatham, and returned to his native land, with the solemn determination to live free, or to die in the attempt of wresting the sceptre from the hands of despotism.

Immediately after his arrival he was chosen a member of the General Congress of the colonies, a body, which, in the language of the eloquent nobleman to whom I have just alluded, “for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion, under such a complication of difficult circumstances, stood incomparable: the organ of three millions of people, whose hearts were animated by that glorious spirit of whiggism which taught them to prefer poverty with liberty, to gilded chains and sordid affluence.” Franklin constituted one of its principal ornaments. He forgot his desire for reconciliation and cast defiance in the face of our “good lords and masters.” He contributed his endeavours, with the utmost zeal, towards obtaining that instrument which set forth our rights and grievances; which declared the freedom of mankind and bore upon its face the impress of immortality. In vain did Howe talk of peace and endurance; the point of endurance had been past. The primeval woods of America still stood, and in their dark depths, more impenetrable than the mountain fastnesses of the ancient Welsh, our ancestors, who inherited all the virtues and the tried valour of the Saxon—who had been tempest-test upon the rough billows of life, and raised and har-

dened in scenes of peril, resolved to carry their liberties, and defend them until their last rifle ball had carried its message of death to the heart of the sacrilegious invader.

You are all acquainted with the circumstances of the struggle which here followed. Let it then suffice for me to say, that in a short time our affairs wore an alarming aspect. The defeats at Long Island, New-York, Fort Washington; the disaster of Greene and the retreat of Washington himself, called aloud for new aid from our friends, and fresh ardour on the part of ourselves. In this emergency all eyes again were turned to Franklin. He had now reached the evening of life. His hairs were silvered with age—seventy one winters had shed their frosts upon him. But, gentlemen, the soul of genius is ever young. The body may be bent down with the burthen of years, the cheek may lose its bloom and the eye its fire, yet that heavenly spark within the mouldering frame is ever bright and active.* This great man hesitated not to die in the service of his country—He accepted with alacrity the offered mission to France. The high reputation which he had acquired as a Philosopher, had gone before him. The first men of the nation received him with open arms. They felt proud to have one so eminent in science and letters among them. During his long residence in England he had been treated with that rancour and malice which power usually produces in ignoble minds. He had now the satisfaction of seeing his merits recognised—all the ambassadors of Europe

*The minds of men of letters, endure to the last gasp—
To them there is but seldom a second childhood.

paid him the utmost deference. Indeed, as Jefferson has remarked, "more respect and veneration attached to his character than to that of any other man, foreigner or native." Such was the estimation in which he was held, that we have fair reasons for believing that his personal influence had more effect in concluding the treaty of alliance with the Court of Versailles than any other consideration whatever.

Why need I speak of the consequences of this treaty. The happy land around you tells, in language louder and stronger than human tongue can utter, the noble efforts of LaFayette and the Count de Grasse.

"That land is like an eagle, whose young gaze
Feeds on the noontide beam; whose golden plume
Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
Of sunrise gleams, when Earth is wrapt in gloom.

—————Myriads assemble there
Whom the proud lords of man, in rage or fear,
Drive from their wasted homes.—————

—————An epitaph of glory, for the tomb
Of murder'd Europe, may thy fame be made,
America."

While Franklin remained in France, it was his custom to attend the Royal Academy of Sciences; for it seems as if his mind was ever engaged, during his leisure hours, in philosophical reflections. Here occurred his celebrated meeting with the wonderful Voltaire. This remarkable man we are told, like himself, had approached the last scene of a long and eventful life. He had just returned from his protracted and memorable residence upon the lakes of Italy, to his native country, and was received, every where, with the greatest profusion of honors. Each had heard of the other—each had exercised a powerful influence over the times in which he lived—each was venerable in age—

each shone the "day star" of a hemisphere. A meeting between such individuals, so renowned for transcendent genius, could not have been otherwise than interesting. Their presence was hailed with shouts of admiration; and when they embraced, as old friends in the cause of knowledge, after a long separation, tears of joy were shed by the multitude, and its loud voice was heard to say, "It is Solon in the arms of Sophocles."

He now, once again, returned to the bosom of his family and the home of his childhood; but was instantly called upon to fill the Presidential Chair of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and, immediately afterwards, in 1787, to assist in framing the Constitution of these United States. This done, having realized his brightest visions, having reached the ultimate of his hopes, he begged leave to pass his few remaining years in the blissful quiet of private life; there, in his own language, to enjoy "peace, and plenty, and liberty, without which man loses half his value," and for which, we may add, he had periled his all—his fortune—his body—his life and his soul.

We must now conclude this great man's life. In the simple and short sketch we have drawn of him, (for circumstances will not permit us to dwell longer upon his acts and his merits, though many remain unmentioned,) we may find those cardinal virtues which should govern us in our voyage through this world—*patience* in his afflictions; *firmness* in his pursuits; *perseverance* in his employments; *economy* in his living; and the *strictest integrity* in every thing that he did. If you would be *wealthy*, learn to

imitate him—If you would be *useful*, learn to imitate him—if you would be *virtuous*, learn to *imitate him*—and, *if* you would be numbered among the *wise* and *great* and *good*, learn to imitate him.

On the 17th day of April 1790, in the 84th year of his age, “the sage whose name is recorded with equal honours in the history of government and that of science; the genius who delivered America, and poured such floods of light upon Europe, returned to the bosom of his God,” and the *civilized world went in mourning for its loss*. In the north-west corner of Christ’s Church yard, a *plain marble* slab covers the remains of the “*immortal Franklin*.”

Fellow members of the Franklinian Society, before we part, listen to the warning words which he uttered a short time before his death. “I am apprehensive,” he said, “perhaps too apprehensive, that our places of honour will become places of profit and corruption, to be gained by faction, tumult and contention, and that our government itself will degenerate into a monarchy.” They seem to say to us—*Beware!* Are not faction and tumult abroad in our land?—have not our high posts of honour become places of profit and corruption? Is not the fatal saying that Republics cannot last, about to be confirmed by our government? Be not deceived—suffer not yourselves to be lulled by the syren voice of power, into the belief that nothing is “rotten in Denmark.” The storm of civil strife and misrule has been gathering in your political firmament for the last ten years: it begins to appear dark and portentous: Henry’s voice is joined to that of Franklin: both have spe-

ken in language which sounds like prophecy—My prayer is that it may prove otherwise. But if it should be so—if in our day the clouds of havock and confusion should burst—if profit should assume the place of honour—if corruption should eat away our purity—if faction should pull down the fairest fabrick of governmental architecture that ever was erected, burying beneath its ruins, truth and justice, prosperity and happiness,—may I not hope, that I now look upon some mighty genius just springing into existence, which like Franklin's in the days of '76, will then rise superior to the spirit of the storm, and re-erect the prostrate altars of our political worship!

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